Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently amended) An answering machine detection method for a voice message delivery system, comprising:

(a) placing an outbound call to a telephone line of a Recipient;

(b) detecting a telephone line pick-up;

(c) performing echo cancellation on the outbound call;

(e) (d) playing a prompt; and

(d) (e) determining, at a voice message server, that the telephone line pick-up was by an existing answering machine when talk-over occurs at the same time as at least a portion of the playing of the prompt, the talk-over comprising voice energy coming from the telephone line of the Recipient.

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Currently amended) The answering machine detection method of claim 1 further comprising:

(e) (f) waiting for silence when the telephone line pick-up was by the existing answering machine;

(f) (g) playing a first message when the telephone line pick-up was by the existing answering machine; and

(g) (h) playing a second message when the telephone line pick-up was by a live Recipient.

4. (Currently amended) The answering machine detection method of claim 3 further comprising:

(h) (i) detecting talk-over by the existing answering machine during the playing of the first message; and

(i) (j) restarting the playing of the first message.

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5. (Previously presented) The answering machine detection method of claim 3, wherein the first message is different from the second message.

6. (Currently amended) The answering machine detection method of claim 3 further comprising:

(h) (i) playing at least one interactive option when the telephone line pick-up was by the live Recipient.

7. (Currently amended) The answering machine detection method of claim 6 further comprising:

(i) (j) playing at least one interactive reject option when the telephone line pick-up was by the live Recipient.

8. (Currently amended) An answering machine detection method for a voice message delivery system, comprising:

(a) placing an outbound call to a telephone line of a Recipient;

(b) detecting a telephone line pick-up;

(c) ~~playing, by a voice message server, a first voice message to the telephone line of the Recipient~~performing echo cancellation on the outbound call;

(d) playing,~~by the voice message server,~~ a ~~second~~ voice message,~~different from the first voice message,~~ that requests a touch-tone input from the telephone line of the Recipient,~~wherein the second voice message is spaced from the first voice message~~; and

(e) determining, ~~after the playing of the first and second voice messages~~at a voice message server, that the telephone line pick-up was by a live Recipient when the requested touch tone input is received at the voice message server.

9. (Currently amended) An answering machine detection method for a voice message delivery system, comprising:

(a) recording, by a Sender, a voice message intended for a Recipient;

(b) placing an outbound call to a telephone line of the intended Recipient of the voice message;

(c) detecting a telephone line pick-up;

(d) requesting, by a voice message server, a specific speech input from the ~~telephone line of the~~intended Recipient of the voice message; and

(e) determining that the telephone line pick-up was by a live ~~Recipient of the voice message~~person when the requested specific speech input is received, at the voice message server, from the ~~telephone line of the~~intended Recipient of the voice message~~at the voice message server~~.

10. (Previously presented) The answering machine detection method of claim 1, wherein the playing of the prompt occurs within one second of detecting the telephone line pick-up.

11. (Currently amended) The answering machine detection method of claim 1 further comprising detecting ~~the~~voice energy after detecting the telephone line pick-up, and wherein the playing of the prompt occurs within one second of detecting the voice energy.

12. (Currently amended) The answering machine detection method of claim 1 further comprising detecting ~~the~~voice energy and an end of ~~the~~that voice energy after detecting the telephone line pick-up, and wherein the playing of the prompt occurs within one second of detecting the end of the voice energy.

13. (Previously presented) The answering machine detection method of claim 1, wherein the playing of the prompt introduces the outbound call to a live Recipient.

14. (Previously presented) The answering machine detection method of claim 13, wherein the prompt is selected from the group consisting of "This is a message from [Sender's name]," "This is a call from [Sender's name]," and "[Sender's name] has sent you a message."

15. (Currently amended) An apparatus for detecting an answering machine for a voice message delivery system, the apparatus comprising a voice message server connectable to a telephone communications system, wherein the voice message server operates to:

(a) place an outbound call to a telephone line of a Recipient;

(b) detect a telephone line pick-up;

(c) perform echo cancellation on the outbound call;

~~(e)~~ (d) play a prompt; and

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(d) (e) determine that the telephone line pick-up was by an existing answering machine when talk-over occurs at the same time as at least a portion of the playing of the prompt, the talk-over comprising voice energy coming from the telephone line of the Recipient.

16. (Cancelled)

17. (Currently amended) The apparatus of claim 15, wherein the voice message server additionally operates to:

(e) (f) wait for silence when the telephone line pick-up was by the existing answering machine;

(f) (g) play a first message when the telephone line pick-up was by the existing answering machine; and

(g) (h) play a second message when the telephone line pick-up was by a live Recipient.

18. (Currently amended) The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the voice message server additionally operates to:

(h) (i) detect talk-over by the existing answering machine during the playing of the first message; and

(i) (j) restart the playing of the first message.

19. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the first message is different from the second message.

20. (Currently amended) The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the voice message server additionally operates to:

(h) (i) play at least one interactive option when the telephone line pick-up was by the live Recipient.

21. (Cancelled)

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